

LEIGHTON BUZZARD

Urban District Council.



ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,

JOHN ALEX. HEDGES, M.R.C.S., &c.,

FOR THE YEAR, 1905.

1906.

TO THE
URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL
OF
LEIGHTON BUZZARD.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

I am happy to lay before you my Annual Report for 1905. I must take the population of 1901 as my basis. As although an increase like what happens in large towns might in a general way be supposed to occur, it simply does not in (at least some) small towns and the villages ; in fact, it is rather the reverse, as the trend is to the *larger* towns, thus emptying the *smaller* places. In this town we have several large houses empty, and have been for a long time, thus not contributing their share to the rates—not contributing to the prosperity of the town by encouraging trade by their custom—and not employing labour which occupants of larger houses by their wealth might be expected to do ; besides large houses, a good many smaller ones are empty also, although, singularly enough, a good many new ones are built and always occupied directly—people going out of the older ones into the new ones. I regret I cannot claim any increase of population on that of the census of 1901—namely 6,331—on which I proceed to base my calculations.

BIRTH RATE.

The Births for the year are 138, compared with 144 in the year 1904, and 170 in 1903, and 148 in 1902—thus showing a marked diminution. This, however, is in line with what is going on all over the country, where the great diminution of births has caused a great deal of attention and some alarm, as it points to the time which would not be very far distant when the deaths would exceed the births, and the population generally be on the decrease.

The births for the year in this town are 138, of which nine are illegitimate. I have never had to report this latter fact before, but am required to do so by a new table, No. 5, which has this year been laid fresh on to Medical Officers of Health, and which further deals with causes of death of children under one year, but this I come to presently.

The number of births (138) work out on a population 6,331 at 21·79 per thousand.

DEATH RATE.

As to Deaths they were 88, compared with 95 in 1904; 94 in 1903; and 103 in 1902; working out at 13·89 per 1,000. The 88 however contain six persons dying in the Union House belonging to parishes other than Leighton Buzzard, thus reducing the number to 82 (our real number), which works out at 12·95 per 1,000—very favourable. Of deaths under one year of age, they number 13, as compared with 16, 16, 14, and 20 of previous four years. The rate per 1,000 of births registered is 94·20, and the newly added Table 5 requires causes of deaths in these 13.—One was from Laryngitis, three from Convulsions, two from Meningitis (not Tuberculous), one from Congenital Syphilis, two from Tuberculous Peritonitis, one from Marasmus, two from Premature Birth, and one from Measles.

Deaths from Enteric Fever, one only, in a child in Vandyke; it was taken to the Isolation Hospital on January 30th, where it died. We disinfected the house premises immediately on removal to hospital. We found the water-supply was from a well; I tested the water, and found it impure. Earth closets seemed to be cleaned out properly; and a small dumb well for slops, which was properly cleaned out. The premises have since been connected with the water-works, and the old drinking well (with its bad water) filled up. No extension of Typhoid there, as the other notification was in another part of the town. This was the only *death* from notifiable disease in the year.

One death from Diarrhœa in a child, one from Enteritis in a child, seven from Phthisis (one of which was in the Union House), eight from other Tubercular diseases. Eight from Cancer—one of which was Epithelioma of the nose, patient aged 84; then one patient of 69, cancer in stomach; one of 61, in the face; two of the same age of 58 respectively rectum and face; one of 56, in the stomach; one of 43, in the uterus; and one of 40, in the orbit. Five from Bronchitis; seven from Pneumonia; three from Cirrhosis of Liver, result of alcoholism; two deaths from premature birth; one from obstructed labour; and as many as 18 cases of heart diseases; and 26 cases of *other* causes than those enumerated in Table 4. One of our townsmen passed away at the age of 100 years.

ZYMOTIC DEATH RATE.

The Zymotic Death Rate in the year was singularly low—only one death, working out at 0·15 per thousand, while the seven deaths from phthisis gives a much higher figure—namely, 1·10; and eight from other tubercular affections gives 1·26 per thousand; five deaths from bronchitis give 0·78, and seven from pneumonia, 1·10. Cancer again gives a high rate (eight) 1·26 per thousand. Heart disease (eighteen) gives 2·84 per thousand.

Of Notifications—eight—namely, two cases of Erysipelas, ages respectively 79 and 63 ; two cases of Scarlet Fever, respectively 8 and 13 ; three cases of Enteric Fever, respectively 53, 12, and 11 years of age. The first-mentioned and last were removed to the Isolation Hospital, where the child of 11 died, as has been described above. As to the other case, the man of 53, aforesaid, his house was simply a new one, and built according to modern sanitary ideas ; cause of malady not traceable. As to the boy of 12, he came from a town in Hampshire where enteric was raging, so he brought it with him. He was treated at the house where he was staying, and when sufficiently recovered he was taken home. The puerperal fever case was treated at her home, and resulted in a recovery.

As to the Schools.—About the end of July, I had occasion to close the Infant County School at Beaudesert on account of Measles. It was only one week before the holidays would begin. This was the worst school attacked. I, however, found it necessary to close all the schools after the holidays for three weeks, so the schools were closed (holidays included) for as long as eight weeks together. This was, on opening, followed by a moderately good attendance ; but in October (soon after August) I had to close the Infant Bassett Road County School, also the Girls' Bassett Road County School, also the Pulford's and St. Andrew's Church Schools, for measles again. Since then the attendance has been all that could be expected, showing that school closure becomes a necessity sometimes.

BAKE-HOUSES.

These have all been visited and found satisfactory ; the necessary white washing has been done with one exception, and this was promised to be done.

PHYSICAL FEATURES.

The physical features and general character of the district are that of a small agricultural town seated on the greensand formation (a very healthy soil) ; but, at the very edge of it, clay beginning almost immediately. The town, too, is in a hollow, so that the rain runs down to it from everywhere, and it is occasionally flooded. The Chain Bridge was re-built some years ago at a greater height, and forming a grand improvement ; but the South Street Bridge is very low and narrow—the street (South Street) running down to the bridge from both sides, showing the absurdity of building it so low. I believe conferences about it have taken place, between the Urban and County Councils, but as yet, the much needed reform has not come about. The river bed is shallow and very winding, thus leading to floods ; and another mischievous factor is the proximity of the water-mill

backing the water—no water-mill should be nearer a town than two miles. If the above-mentioned factors, in producing dampness, were improved upon, it is obvious that a very sensible improvement in the public health would ensue ; as it is, the foregoing figures as to phthisis, pneumonia, and bronchitis, show that the mortality from respiratory affections is too high, and that, if the water had greater facilities for getting away, the lessened dampness would exhibit an improvement in this respect.

A constant attention is shown by the Council and its officers to the house accommodation, as to fitness for habitation, over-crowding, &c.; the newer houses certainly have more garden space allotted to them than was the case formerly. Plans for erection of new houses have a plentiful supervision before being allowed to proceed.

Sewerage and drainage, on an improved system, being thrown up by Schone's ejectors to the higher portion of the town, then falling by gravitation to the outfall works, where the sewage is treated before effluent goes to river.—House refuse cleared by a public scavenger. Water supply from a deep well at 200 feet, pumped up to a water tower, then falling from that height and by gravitation reaching all parts of the town.

Lodging-houses are licensed by the Urban Council, and are duly and frequently inspected.

Slaughter-houses, dairies, cow-sheds, milk-shops, bake-houses, &c., have constant oversight.

As to dealing with Infectious Diseases, we have Grovebury Hospital to remove them to—an offer which is sometimes declined—and if we find isolation is possible and complete, we allow patient to remain at his home ; and a Small-Pox Hospital for its especial purpose. I have had occasion to congratulate our Urban Council on the public spirit shown by them, conjointly with the Linslade Urban Council, in retaining the Small-Pox Hospital for the neighbourhood, as the third partner (the Wing Rural Council) had backed out, and their action is so doing, rendered a sale by auction necessary—and the two Urban Councils bought it.

In January, Mr. Stewart prepared a plan for laying out Little King's Mead, draining, levelling, &c. This has been carried out, and a very successful and desirable improvement and enlargement of the existing Recreation Ground has been thereby produced, adding to the attractions of the town, which, surely, only wants more knowing to become appreciated as a residential locality; especially if the dampness, above alluded to, were obviated. Otherwise, the excellent soil,

sheltered situation, excellent hygienic arrangements, proximity of the pines (so highly appreciated when in a fashionable locality like Bournemouth, for instance), good shops, first-class railway accommodation, pretty scenery (rendering drives interesting), are advantages that amply deserve appreciation.

As to sanitary inspections and details, we got the privies at the Crown Inn converted into w.c's, thus improving the hygiene of a crowded locality.

As to a certain property in the High Street, often inspected and reported on, a summons was issued to owner, to compel necessary repairs under Health Acts, but, as the said owner forthwith commenced to do his duty, the summons (by magistrates' consent) was withdrawn.

Certain drains in Lammas Close were found defective, and have since been made good.

On the 10th of January, the County Medical Officer of Health visited the Small-Pox Hospital and questioned the patient as to the many places he had been to and allowed to leave; that gentleman afterwards issued his report. The above patient was discharged on the 17th, the whole bedding was thoroughly washed by the nurses, and who themselves (after being kept in quarantine a short time) were discharged.

The Chapel Path property—agent promised to give it his immediate attention on a closing order being threatened.

Workhouse Lane property—nothing done; owner seeming to think it was hardly worth spending money on.

Plantation Road property—owner's son promised to connect with sewer and water works.

Windmill Path property—owner has laid on the water.

On a case of erysipelas being notified, we visited the premises, and found them in a sanitary condition.

Complaints having been made of children being sent to school in a dirty condition, we visited some premises in America, and found them occupied by some very dirty people, who would send out the children perhaps, not otherwise than dirty. We found the water laid on, and we recommended the drainage to be connected.

Hockliffe Road—sides of well had fallen in, exposing the steining close to an open channel, risking contamination of the water ; this was repaired and the well cleaned out, owner contending that this would leave the water pure. Notice was, however, given to him to connect with Council's water.

Stable at rear of 67 was not kept in a cleanly state, so we condemned the building, and it will be re-erected at back of garden.

No. 53, Hockliffe Road—this property was reported as requiring new roof especially and new spouting, also general white-washing. This, however, was allowed to remain in abeyance, owing to recent death of aged owner, but latterly, the required repairs have been effected.

South Street property has been put in repair.

The Sanitary Inspector of Aylesbury, wrote to me about a case of enteric they had there—that the man had been lodging in Leighton, and worked on the sewage works in Linslade. The Inspector and myself visited his former lodgings and found them clean, and the property was connected with the water and sewage works, and there was no case of enteric in the town, so we could throw no light on the case at all.

Case of scarlatina was moved into hospital ; we visited the premises, and found nothing to account for it, but scarlatina is generally spread through letters by post, or books, more than any thing else.

Case of small-pox, notified from the Union House—the patient, along with her husband, taken by my orders to the Small-pox Hospital where the Union Doctor attended ; nurses were wired for, and arrived same evening about 10 p.m. Man was kept in quarantine the usual time, then discharged ; the woman (patient) went on very well, and discharged at fitting time. It seems difficult to imagine how we could do without the Small-pox Hospital.

On June 3rd, a rumour was spread about the town, that a man who had been sleeping in a lodging house at Fenny Stratford, where there had been a case of small-pox, and it was thought he had come on to Leighton. The Inspector and myself took prompt measures by informing Supt. Anniwell (who gives orders for admission of tramps to the tramp ward at Union House), also told all the lodging-house keepers *not* to receive anyone coming from Fenny Stratford. Happily, the man gave our town a wide berth, so the scare disappeared.

Complaints of bad smells in Billington Road (an extension of Lake Street) reaching us, our Inspector visited premises and found the hind quarters of a beast in a high state of putrefaction and giving off offensive odours. It was immediately buried, and the owner cautioned that if it occurred again a prosecution would be the result; also cautioning him that his pigs must be kept in a more cleanly state; a new dung pit to be built, and the pig-sty floors be made smooth with concrete. A slaughter-house in this yard, the floor of which should be rendered smooth, and the trapped gully moved from inside to outside of house and connected with Council's sewer.

3, Water Lane.—Overcrowding.—Father and three daughters, 26, 24, and 19, and two sons of 18 and 16 years of age; the said two sons and three daughters occupying one sleeping-room, which contained 762 cubic feet, which would be little more than half the proper requirement. This house was closed by the action of the Urban Council, thus abating the nuisance most effectually.

Overflowing cess pits on Heath Road complained of. Agent's attention was called, and they were emptied at once and disinfected. Connections, however, ought to be made with town works.

Two cases of overcrowding at East Street duly reported on, and steps taken to ameliorate.

Vital Statistics of Whole District during 1905 and previous Years.

YEAR.	Population estimated to middle of each Year.	BIRTHS.		TOTAL DEATHS REGISTERED IN THE DISTRICT.				Deaths in Public Institu- tions.	Deaths of Non-Residents registered in district.	Deaths of Residents registered beyond District	DEATHS AT ALL AGES NETT.	
		Number.	Rate.*	Under 1 year of age.		At all ages.					Number	Rate.*
				Number.	Rate per 1000 Births registered.	Number	Rate.*					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1895	6544	182	27.76	23	126.42	109	16.63	17	8		101	15.41
1896	6517	169	25.93	16	94.67	87	13.34	12	6		81	12.42
1897	6480	139	21.45	9	64.74	93	14.35	16	6		87	13.42
1898	6442	170	26.38	27	158.82	115	17.85	27	14		101	15.67
1899	6408	150	23.40	18	120.00	129	20.13	25	16		113	17.63
1900	6370	141	21.97	21	148.93	105	16.48	21	9		96	15.07
1901	6331	84	13.26	20	238.00	111	17.53	15	7		104	16.42
1902	6331	148	23.42	14	84.39	103	16.26	16	13		90	14.21
1903	6331	170	26.85	16	94.11	94	14.84	15	10		94	14.84
1904	6331	144	22.74	16	111.11	95	15.00	18	8		87	13.74
Averages for years 1895- 1904	6409.5	149.7	23.31	18	124.11	104.1	16.24	18.2	9.7		95.4	14.88
1905	6331	138	21.79	13	94.20	88	13.89	10	6		82	12.95

* Rates calculated per 1,000 of estimated population.

NOTE.—The deaths to be included in Column 7 of this table are the whole of those registered during the year as having actually occurred within the district or division. The deaths to be included in Column 12 are the number in Column 7, corrected by the subtraction of the number in Column 10 and the addition of the number in Column 11.

By the term "Non-residents" is meant persons brought into the district on account of illness, and dying there; and by the term "Residents" is meant persons who have been taken out of the district on account of illness, and have died elsewhere.

Area of District in acres (exclusive of area covered by water). }	13605	Total population at all ages	6331	} At Census of 1901.
		Number of inhabited houses	...	...	1630
		Average number of persons per house	...		3.8	

Vital Statistics of separate Localities in 1905 and previous years.

YEAR.			Population estimated to middle of each year.	Births registered.	Deaths at all ages.	Deaths under 1 year.
1895	...	...	6554	182	109	23
1896	...	...	6517	169	87	16
1897	...	...	6480	139	93	9
1898	...	...	6442	170	115	27
1899	...	...	6408	150	129	18
1900	...	...	6370	141	105	21
1901	...	...	6331	84	111	20
1902	...	...	6331	148	103	14
1903	...	...	6331	170	94	16
1904	...	...	6331	144	95	16
Averages of Years 1895 to 1904		...	6049.5	149.7	104.1	18
1905	...	...	6331	138	88	13

Causes and Ages of all Deaths during Year 1905.

	All ages.	Under 1 year.	1 and under 5	5 and under 15.	15 and under 25.	25 and under 65.	65 and upwards.	Total Deaths in Public Institutions.
Enteric Fever	1	...	...	1	...	...	...	1
Diarrhoea	1	...	1	...	...	...	...	...
Enteritis	1	...	1	...	...	...	...	...
Phthisis	7	...	...	...	1	5	1	1
Other tubercular diseases	8	5	2	...	...	1	...	...
Cancer (malignant disease)	8	...	...	...	...	6	2	...
Bronchitis	5	...	...	1	...	2	2	2
Pneumonia	7	1	4	1	...	...	1	...
Alcoholism Cirrhosis of Liver	3	...	...	...	...	3	...	1
Premature birth	2	2	...	...	...	...	...	...
Diseases and accidents of parturition	1	...	...	...	...	1	...	...
Heart diseases	18	...	...	...	...	4	14	4
Accidents	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
All other causes	26	5	2	1	1	5	12	1
All causes	88	13	10	4	2	27	32	—

Cases of Infectious Disease notified during the year 1905.

	At all ages.	Under 1.	1 to 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 25.	25 to 65.	65 and upwards.	No of cases removed to Hospital from each locality.
Small-pox	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Cholera	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Diphtheria	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Membranous croup	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Erysipelas	2	...	...	...	...	1	1	...
Scarlet fever	2	...	...	1	...	...	...	...
Typhus fever	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Enteric fever	3	...	...	3	...	1	...	2
Relapsing fever	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Continued fever	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Puerperal fever	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Plague	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	8	—	—	4	—	2	1	2

Isolation Hospital at Grovebury ; also (in partnership with Linslade Urban) a Small Pox Hospital on the Stanbridge Road.

INFANTILE MORTALITY DURING THE YEAR 1905.

Deaths from stated Causes in Weeks and Months under One Year of Age.

CAUSE OF DEATH.			Under 1 week.	4 weeks.	3 months.	4 months.	6 months.	7 months.	8 months.	9 months.	Total Deaths under 1 year.
All Causes	...	...	2	1	2	1	2	3	1	1	13
Measles	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Premature Birth	...	...	1	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	2
Marasmus	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Peritonitis	...	...	...	...	...	1	1	...	...	...	2
Syphilis	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	1
Meningitis	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1	...	...	2
Convulsions	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	...	1	3
Pneumonia	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	1
			2	1	2	1	2	3	1	1	13

Births in the Year { Legitimate, 129.
Illegitimate, 9.

Population (estimated to middle of 1905)...6331.

Deaths from ALL CAUSES AT ALL AGES ... 88.

Factories, Workshops, Laundries, Workplaces & Homework

1.—INSPECTION.

Including Inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors or Inspectors of Nuisances.

Premises.	No. of Inspections.	No. of Written Notices.	No. of Prosecutions
Factories (including Factory Laundries)
Workshops (including Workshop Laundries)
Workplaces
Homeworkers' Premises
Total

These have all been duly inspected and found satisfactory. The necessary whitewashing has been done, with one exception, and this was promised to be done.

2.—DEFECTS FOUND.

*Nuisances under Public Health Acts :—**

Particulars.	Number of Defects.			Number of Prosecutions
	Found.	Remedied.	Referred to H.M. Inspector.	
Want of cleanliness
Want of Ventilation
Overcrowding
Want of drainage of floors
Other nuisances
†Sanitary accommodations } insufficient
} unsuitable or defective
} not separate for sexes

Offences under the Factory and Workshop Act :—

Illegal occupation of underground bakehouses (S 101) ...	None	...	...	...
Breach of special sanitary requirements for bakehouses (SS. 97 to 100) ...	None	...	...	...
Failure as regard lists of outworks (S. 107) ...	...	...	...	...
Giving out work to be done in premises } unwholesome (S. 108)	...	...	...	...
which are } infected (S. 110)	...	...	...	...
Allowing wearing apparel to be made in premises infected by scarlet fever or small-pox (S. 109) ...	...	...	...	...
Other offences ...	...	...	...	...
Total ...	...	...	...	...

* Including those specified in Sections 2, 3, 7, and 8, of the Factory Acts as remediable under the Public Health Acts.

† For districts not in London state here whether Section 22 of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1890, has been adopted by the District Council; and if so what standard of sufficiency and suitability of sanitary accommodation for persons employed in factories and workshops has been enforced.

Trusting this brief annual account of the hygienic history of our town will prove interesting and satisfactory,

I beg to remain,

Gentlemen,

Yours obediently,

J. A. HEDGES,

Medical Officer of Heath.